

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method of accessing data at a server computer from a client computer connected
2 via a network, the data being stored on a data storage device connected to the server computer, the
3 method comprising the steps of:
4 at the server computer,
5 receiving a request for data from the client computer;
6 determining whether the client computer can access the data in its stored form;
7 when it is determined that the client computer cannot access the data in its stored
8 form, converting the data into a form that the client computer can access; and
9 returning a locator to the client computer for locating the converted data.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of receiving a request further comprises
2 the step of receiving a URL command.

1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the URL command specifies a file identifier for
2 a file containing the data and a file format for the file.

1 4. The method of claim 3, before the step of retrieving the file, further comprising the
2 step of determining whether the file identifier is valid.

1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the step of determining further comprises the step
2 of comparing the file format specified by the URL command to a file extension of the stored file.

1 6. The method of claim 5, wherein the step of converting further comprises the step
2 of converting the retrieved file to the file format specified by the URL command.

1 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
2 storing the converted data at the server computer; and
3 generating a path name to locate the converted data.

1 22. The article of manufacture of claim 21, before the step of retrieving the file, further
2 comprising the step of determining whether the file identifier is valid.

1 23. The article of manufacture of claim 22, wherein the step of determining further
2 comprises the step of comparing the file format specified by the URL command to a file extension
3 of the stored file.

1 24. The article of manufacture of claim 23, wherein the step of converting further
2 comprises the step of converting the retrieved file to the file format specified by the URL
3 command.

1 25. The article of manufacture of claim 19, further comprising the steps of:
2 storing the converted data at the server computer; and
3 generating a path name to locate the converted data.

1 26. The article of manufacture of claim 25, wherein the locator comprises the path
2 name.

1 ^{sub} 27. The article of manufacture of claim 26, wherein the client computer has a Web
2 browser, and further comprising the step of, under control of the Web browser, retrieving the
3 converted data from the server computer using the generated path name.

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